

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 06111 120808Z

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 EB-07 /017 W

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R 120712Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6553

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

UNCLAS CANBERRA 6111

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, AS

SUBJ: MAJOR PROJECTS: RAILROAD ELECTRIFICATION

REF: STATE 214907

1. EMBASSY HAS DISCUSSED PROJECTS REPORTED REFTEL WITH DAVID TURNER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, RAIL BRANCH, AND JOHN SPENCER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, URBAN TRANSPORT, AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT, CANBERRA AND HAS OBTAINED FOLLOWING CLARIFICATION.

2. SOFRERAIL HAS IN FACT BEEN AWARDED CONTRACT, BUT TO STUDY LONG-TERM ELECTRIFICATION NEEDS OF AUSTRALIAN RAIL TRANSPORT SYSTEM IN CONTEXT OF AUSTRALIAN ENERGY PROBLEM, NOT FEASIBILITY ANY SPECIFIC SEGMENT OF PRESENT SYSTEM. THERE APPARENTLY ARE NO PLANS FOR ELECTRIFICATION SUDYEY-MELBOURNE LINE IN NEAR FUTURE. BOTH OFFICIALS ALSO STATED REPORT REGARDING TWO OTHER ROUTES MENTIONED REFTEL INCORRECT. THEY SPECULATED THAT ITS BASIS PROBABLY STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT JONES, IN COURSE OF RECENT PARLIAMENTARY FLAP OVER UNAUTHORIZED EFFORT TO RAISE PETRODOLLAR LOANS ABROAD, TO EFFECT THAT AMONG PROJECTS FOR WHICH PROCEEDS THESE LOANS MIGHT HAVE BEEN USED WAS ASSISTANCE TO STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES IN ELECTRIFYING THESE LINES. SPENCER STRESSED THAT NO ASSISTANCE WAS CURRENTLY BEING GIVEN OR WAS PLANNED IN NEAR FUTURE. AMCONGEN SYDNEY SEEKING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM STATE RAIL AUTHORITIES AND WILL REPORT ACCORDINGLY.

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PAGE 02 CANBER 06111 120808Z

3. WE UNDERSTAND TEAM OF FOUR SOFRERAIL EXPERTS ARRIVING CANBERRA SEPTEMBER 14 TO BEGIN FIELD STUDIES LASTING APPROXIMATELY THREE WEEKS. TURNER SAID FRENCH FIRM HAD BEEN AWARDED CONTRACT FROM AMONG FIVE OR SIX BIDDERS AND THAT HE RECALLED HAVING CONTACTED UNIDENTIFIED POTENTIAL U.S. BIDDER BUT RECEIVING NO REPLY. HE ASKED TO BE INFORMED OF U.S. CONSULTING ENGINEERS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN SIMILAR WORK IN AUSTRALIA.

4. ACTION REQUESTED. EMBASSY WILL FURNISH TURNER WITH LIST OF U.S. ENGINEERS OF THIS DESCRIPTION KNOWN CURRENTLY TO HAVE OFFICES IN AUSTRALIA. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT PROVIDING ADDITIONAL NAMES OF FIRMS WHICH MAY NOT NOW BE REPRESENTED HERE.
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